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ABSTRACT

The role of international and comparative education in teacher education must be informed by the needs of American students which include overcoming cultural parochialism due to racial and cultural isolation and inadequate schooling. The urgency of economic and cultural survival for certain groups such as African-American, Appalachian, and Latino students can impede their willingness to explore the complexity of the international community and how their daily lives are impacted by global events. American teachers know little of the forces that drive and/or deter schooling globally. They are unaware that for many other societies schooling is a privilege, not a right. Immigrant students not only place a high value on education but carry the added burden of representing their village or town. These differences in the priorities and preoccupations of immigrant students compared with native-born students, contribute to their academic engagement, fear of failure, and resultant success. Teachers in training are ill-prepared to address the parochialism of American students, the connections between international and national oppression and competition, or the differences in needs and orientation of students from diverse backgrounds. Curriculum changes in teacher education to address these issues would lead to a needed improvement in all schools. (JB)

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ABSTRACT

The Role of Global Understanding within Multicultural Teacher Education for Culturally Isolated and Threatened Students

The role of international and comparative education in teacher education must be informed by the needs of American students which include overcoming cultural parochialism due to racial and cultural isolation and inadequate schooling. The urgency of economic and cultural survival for certain groups such as African-American, Appalachian, and Latino students can impede their willingness of explore the complexity of the international community and how their daily lives are impacted by global events.

American teachers know little of the political and economic forces that drive and/or deter schooling globally. They are unaware that for many other societies schooling is a privilege, not a right. Hence, students from many countries who do have the opportunity for formal schooling not only place a high value on education but carry the added burden of being representatives of their village or town. These differences in the priorities and preoccupations of immigrant students compared with native-born students contribute to academic engagement, fear of failure, and resultant success by immigrant students.

Teachers in training are ill-prepared to address the parochialism of American students, the connections between international and national oppression and competition, or the differences in needs and orientation of students from diverse backgrounds. Increased immigration from Asia, Latin America, and Europe highlights the needs for teacher preparation, especially for future teachers who themselves are drawn from culturally threatened communities. Curriculum changes in teacher education including language acquisition, geography, comparative religion, and global history would lead to a needed improvement in all schools and especially where culturally threatened students are increasingly preponderant.

This presentation provides an integration of international and comparative education with vigorous multicultural teacher education. Ideas for improved recruitment and preparation of future teachers are placed in a context of needs expressed by urban teachers of color for improvement in teacher education as well as by preservice students facing diverse, urban classrooms.

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The Role of Global Understanding within Multicultural Teacher Education for Culturally Isolated and Threatened Students

The role of international and comparative education in teacher education must be informed by the needs of American students which include overcoming cultural parochialism due to racial and cultural isolation and inadequate schooling. Teachers in training are ill-prepared to address the parochialism of American students, the connections between international and national oppression and competition, or the differences in needs and orientation of students from diverse backgrounds around the globe. Increased immigration from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe, as well as Mexico, highlights the needs for teacher preparation, especially for future teachers who themselves are drawn from culturally isolated and threatened communities. In this paper I use the concept, "culturally isolated and threatened students," to indicate the lack of exposure to global understanding due to both a deficient K-12 education and the elitist nature of international education. First, I will delineate the problems as I see them, then offer an interpretation, and finally, suggest some solutions.

PROBLEMS

1. Elitism

International and comparative education have remained in the domain of the elite even as we become a more global society with significant interdependency. There is an assumption that international education is not for ordinary students. We even make the distinction between international students and immigrants. Is the difference based on choice? If they have a return ticket, they are international, if not, they are refugees?

Which leads to the curious question: When is culture "cultural capital"? Ironically, often if international students go to private school their international qualities (language capabilities, life experiences, etc.) are usually valued. If the same students go to public school, their cultural difference is often seen as a deficit.

2. The Inability or unwillingness to differentiate without discriminating.

I would argue that there is a direct link between parochialism and racism in all societies. Parochialism feeds into racism. Racism is blind to cultural differences; this is part of its oppression. Due to America's preoccupation with color as a codifying unit, we are baffled by the lack of congruency between individuals of the same "race." Individuals are often grouped together solely based on the color of their skin disregarding significant differences in culture, religion, language, and class.

3. Misunderstanding of differences in educational attainment. Education as a right vs. privilege.

International students who have had the privilege of formal schooling not only place a high value on education when they arrive in America but they carry the burden of being representatives of their village or town (Ogbu, 1989). These differences from American students in preoccupations and priorities contribute to a student's level of engagement academically, fear of failure, and resultant success.

4. Lack of understanding of the political and economic forces that drive and/or deter schooling globally.

There are many questions to be faced in understanding political and economic global

2. the commonalities between peoples.
3. global opportunities for study and work.
4. what skills are required to compete in a global marketplace.
5. choices for students to either prepare to enter and compete within the "system" and/or transform it.
6. how capitalism operates in needing an underclass of workers.
7. how internalized oppression and self-inflicted feelings of failure are handicaps to realizing what opportunities exist.

SOLUTIONS

1. **A curriculum with linkages between international and national realities.**

A quality international education program would include a history of other world cultures, their migration and immigration patterns, as well as the diversity that exists within countries/continents that Americans see as homogeneous due to similarity in skin color.

Language learning is seen as elitist and peripheral largely due to America's ethnocentric and assimilationist perspective. European languages continue to dominate the school curriculum with French, Spanish, and German comprising 90-95% of all language enrollments (K-12 & post-secondary). Yet these languages are spoken by only 14 % of the world's population. In contrast, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian account for less that 1 % of K-12 enrollments and 5-8% of those in college (Johnston, 1994).

2. **Teachers who are conversant in the complexity of today's world.**

Selection criteria, recruitment procedure, and qualifications for teaching must be revised. This is for both university faculty and K-12 teachers. Included should be knowledge of a second language. This does not necessarily mean fluency but the experience of having struggled through learning another language. E.S.L. training is needed. Most teachers today will have students in their classrooms who do not have English as their first language. Some will have up to 12 different languages in one classroom.

3. **Teacher training which operates from a global perspective.**

If teachers do not have a second language or E.S.L. training when they enter their teacher education program, then they will have to have it as part of their teacher training experience, or, in case of alternative programs, before they enter the classroom. More attention is needed in geography, comparative religion, and global history. Courses which provide a political and economic understanding of social stratification and racism are needed to understand the impediments some lower income families face and why they are resistant to "foreigners." Other additions could include comparative education courses, study abroad and other overseas experience with an educational focus. More working class and students of color need to travel internationally to dispel the negative images perpetuated by the US media.

4. **Faculty in both the Colleges of Education and in the Liberal Arts who have an understanding of international issues and incorporate it into their teaching.**

Global studies has long been viewed as elitist and extraneous. Not until college educators become aware of international issues and understand how what happens outside American borders impacts our daily lives will the incorporation of global studies become a natural part of their teaching. The inclusion of information about other cultures and countries has less to do with revamping one's course material than revamping one's mind. Personal

transformation of perspective enables one to critique any material. Only when students are held responsible for understanding historical and current events on a global scale will global studies be viewed as integral to learning in this country and move beyond its elitist range.

5. **Foreign students, their families and community used as resources.**

Lying dormant in most ethnic communities across this country are people who can unlock the mysteries and resolve the concern regarding the increased ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity of our society. Explanations are available but we need to ask. We need to see foreign students, their families, and communities as resources. They are not asking us to understand without knowledge; but they are confused as to why we do not ask. There are reasons why people act and think the way they do. Most of our biases and prejudices would be removed if we allowed ourselves to gain a closer look.

If we are to resolve conflict between multigenerational Americans and newly arrived immigrants, we need to see how these immigrants represent world cultures which are historically powerful, sophisticated, and cultured.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I advocate for an integration of international and comparative education within a vigorous multicultural teacher education. Improved recruitment and preparation of future teachers is essential if we are to serve students effectively. By not providing an international perspective to our Foundations work we deprive students, especially future educators, of the awareness and tools to deal with diversity in its widest sense.

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